UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.91/L.9
7 November 1997

ENGLISH ONLY

SEVENTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 13-22 January 1998
Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

TERMINOLOGY IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology for the period 1992-1997

Paper submitted by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Working Group on Toponymic Terminology**

* E/CONF.91/1.

** Prepared by Prof. N. Kadmon, Convenor, Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.

97-34708 (E) 081297

1. Terms of Reference of the Working Group

At the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1992, the text for a resolution concerning the activity of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was presented as document E/CONF.85/L.5. This was discussed by both the Group of Experts and the Conference and adopted by the latter as Resolution No. 11, charging the Working Group "to continue to function with the aim of producing a multilingual dictionary of toponymic terminology to include [besides English] the remaining five official languages of the United Nations". See Appendix A to the present report for a full text of the resolution. This resolution then constitutes the terms of reference of the Working Group.

2. Working Group Membership.

Formally, the following Experts were named as members of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology by the UNGEGN at its 14th Session in 1989:

Ms. Kerfoot (Canada)
Ms. Närhi (Finland)
Mr. Ficor (Hungary)
Mr. Gonzales (Spain)
Mr. Hornansky (Czechoslovakia)
Mr. Lapierre (Canada)
Mr. Lewis (United Kingdom)
Mr. Payne (United States of America)
Mr. Raper (South Africa)
Mr. Sievers (Federal Republic of Germany)
Mr. Kadmon (Israel), convenor and editor of the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology*.

While most of these have continued to be active, some haye not. The list of UNGEGN experts who indicated at the 17th Session in 1994 their willingness to be members of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was as follows:

Ms. Kerfoot (Canada)
Ms. Lejeune (France)
Ms. Närhi (Finland)
Mr. Abdo (Saudi Arabia)
Mr. Cruz (Spain)
Mr. Dorion (Canada)
Mr. Hornansky (Czech Republic)
Mr. Kotsonis (Cyprus)
Mr. Payne (United States of America)
Mr. Pokoly (Hungary)
Mr. Quinting (United Staes of America)
Mr. Raper (South Africa)

Mr. Sievers (Federal Republic of Germany)
Mr. Kadmon (Israel), convenor and editor of the *Glossary*.

3. Meetings of the Working Group

Since the Sixth Conference, the Working Group held the following meetings:
New York, 28 August 1992
New York, 1 September 1992
New York, 15 June 1994
Geneva, 15 August 1996.
While in the past the meetings of the Working Group were "closed" ones (though open to non-member Experts who wished to take part in the discussions), at the Geneva 18th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names the meeting of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology was declared an "open" session of the entire Group of Experts. This resulted in a greater amount of input to the Working Group's work, and indeed the amendments to the English version – with the exception of the terms "endonym" and "exonym" (see below) – were finalized on this occasion. The definitions of these last two terms were then reviewed, debated and adopted at the session on Exonyms of the Group of Experts, which was *de facto* a continuation of that on Terminology. It can safely be said that no UNGEGN document was as widely and thoroughly discussed as the *Glossary*.

4. The Terms "Exonym" and "Endonym"

Among the 375 terms included in the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology*, none attracted the amount of discussion as did these two expressions. After lengthy deliberations the following definitions were adopted:

endonym: Name of a geographical feature in one of the languages occurring in that area where the feature is situated.

exonym: Name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language has official status, and differing in its form from the name used in the official language or languages of the area where the geographical feature is situated.

5. First Utilization of the Glossary at United Nations Training Courses

The early English version of the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology* has been used at least twice in a toponymic training environment. Version 1.2 was introduced at the first UN Training Course in Toponymy for Southern African Countries held in Pretoria, South Africa, in July 1992, with a lecture about the Dictionary by the Convenor being followed by a practical exercise in its application by the students. This feature was repeated in the second course, again held in Pretoria, in September 1993. The Glossary was appended to the training manual *An Introduction to Toponymy – Theory and Practice of Geographical Names* by N. Kadmon published by the Department of Geography, University of Pretoria, 1993 (ISBN 0-86979-905-3).

6. Programme of Activities, 1994-1996

In complying with a request by the rapporteur of the Group of Experts the convenor supplied, on 21 June 1994, a detailed prognosis of the activities concerning the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology* for the period 1994-1996. See Appendix B.

Version 2 of the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology*, based on discussions by the Working Group in 1992, was distributed to its members in 1994. Version 3, based on work in 1994, was distributed to all members of the Group of Experts in 1996. Examples, including those in 16 different languages and scripts, were added by the convenor/editor.

7. Translation into the other UN Official Languages.

Resolution No. 11 of the Sixth Conference recommends, in para. 1 (b), that the UN Secretariat be asked ".... to supply .... a translation of the new Glossary from English into each of the other five official languages of the United Nations." Furthermore, it was agreed (para. 2) that, after basic translation by the Conference and Translation Services, the Group of Experts "... appoint one or more experts ... to coordinate and be responsible for the translation into each of these languages". During discussions of this item by the Group of Experts on 4 September 1992 the representative of the Conference and Translation Services informed the Group that translation could be effected only after the beginning of 1993. Accordingly, the Convenor of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology on 10 February 1993 dispatched the material to be translated, amended after the meetings of the Working Group on 28 August and 1 September 1992, to the Secretariat in New York, both on diskette and as a laser printout.

On 17 September 1993 the Convenor was informed that the Secretariat was still "... searching for funds [for translation] .... but the chance is not too promising due to the unprecedented lack of funds being experienced by the United Nations at the present time".

On 4 October 1993 the UN Translation Unit informed the Convenor via the Secretariat that "since the translators do not possess the expertise to adequately deal with technical terms, they suggest that this glossary of terminology be made available to the experts nominated for each language so that they could edit the translation of these technical terms in conformity with changes and/or additions introduced by you".

Consequently, the 17th Session of UNGEGN asked for volunteers from among the Experts to translate the *Glossary* into their respective languages. The following Experts kindly offered their services, which the UNGEGN gratefully accepted:

Ms. S. Lejeune and M. H. Dorion – French;
Mr. Du Xiangming – Chinese;
Mr. J. Cruz – Spanish.

Since no volunteers were found for the remaining languages, it was decided that the U.N. Documentation, Reference and Terminology Service again be asked to perform at least the translation into Arabic and Russian. To this end the convenor, as editor of the *Glossary*, supplied the UNGEGN Secretariat in New York with both a diskette of Ver. 2 and a clean camera-ready laser printout for distribution to the above named Experts and the Chief of the U.N. Documentation Service. On 23 June 1994 a request to this effect was handed to the UNGEGN Secretariat. On 29 October 1994 a reminder

was sent. After a further letter on 9 April 1996 the Convenor was informed by the Secretariat that owing to a lack of resources no progress had been made with the translations into Russian and Arabic by the U.N. Reference and Terminology Services.

The situation at the time of writing (October 1997) is as follows:

Chinese – Prof. Du Xiangming had supplied the convenor with a first translation of Version 2 into Chinese in June 1994, and a corrected and improved printout in July 1996.

French – the French form of Version 2 of the *Glossary*, translated and edited by Mme. Lejeune (France) and M. Dugas (Canada), was handed to the convenor during the 18th Session of the UNGEGN in August 1996.

Spanish – Sr. Cruz sent his translation of Version 2 to the convenor in July 1997.

Russian – no progress reported.

Arabic – no progress reported.

Thus, while the work of editing the Glossary during the period 1989-1994, when no input of resources on the part of the UN Secretariat was involved, adhered strictly to the timetable, the same cannot be said for the period under review, owing to cuts in UN budgets. It is hoped that the Arabic and Russian translations will be received before or during the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

8. Translation into German

The Dutch- and German-Speaking Division of UNGEGN decided in 1993 to have the Dictionary translated into German. Dr. Karl-August Seel and Dr. Jörn Sievers negotiated the first contact with the Convenor and, after completion of the rough translation, asked the latter to send his comments and corrections concerning the German version. This request was complied with. The German *Ständiger Ausschuß für Geographische Namen* (Permanent Committee for Geographical Names) then produced a final German version, which was published by the *Institut für Angewandte Geodäsie* in Frankfurt/Main in 1995.

9. Activity since the 18th Session of UNGEGN

As mentioned in para. 3 above, the amendments to the English version of the *Glossary* were finalized at the 18th Session of the UN Group of Experts in 1996. After this session the convenor incorporated all additions, deletions and changes in Version 3, which now constitutes Version 4. In March, 1997 this was sent to the UNGEGN Secretariat in New York, both in digital format on diskette and as a clean camera-ready hard copy, for transmission to the translators into the five remaining official languages of the United Nations. The translators into those languages for which translations have already been received, namely Chinese, French and Spanish, only have to incorporate in their translations the amendments which constitute Version 4.

10. Tasks for the Future

Since, for reasons outside the influence of the Working Group or its convenor, the original timetable (see Appendix B) cannot be adhered to, the most urgent tasks now are (a) to have the *Glossary* translated into the missing official languages of the United Nations, (b) have the translations into Chinese, French and Spanish brought to Version 4 standard, and (c) have the entire material collated, checked and edited by the Convenor/Editor. In view of the Sixth Conference "recognizing that, to achieve maximum effect in the standardization of geographical names at national and international levels, the glossary should be available to as wide a readership as possible" (Resolution No. 11), it is hoped that this project will be given the necessary assistance and facilities by the Secretariat, whose task has already been made much easier by the above-named Experts' willingness to perform the translations free of charge.

A further task resulting from the terms of reference, both current and extending into the future, will be reviewing and periodically updating the *Glossary*, as recommended in Resolution 11 (Recommendation 3) of the Sixth Conference. The most economical way of doing this will have to be discussed.

Appendix A

Resolution No. 11 of the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, 1992

Glossary of Toponymic Terminology

The Conference

Noting that a new glossary has been prepared by the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, as recommended by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names at its fifteenth session,

Noting further that, in accordance with the same recommendation, the glossary was compiled, in the first stage, in English only,

Recognizing that, to achieve maximum effect in the standardization of geographical names at national and international levels, the glossary should be available to as wide a readership as possible,

1. Recommends:

(a) That the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology be asked to continue to function, with the aim of producing a multilingual dictionary of toponymic terminology to include the remaining five official languages of the United Nations;

(b) That the United Nations Secretariat be asked to supply, within an agreed time-frame and within existing resources, a translation of the new Glossary from English into each of the other five official languages of the United Nations;

2. Recommends further that the United Nations group of Experts on Geographical Names, at its sixteenth session, appoint one or more experts to the Working Group to coordinate and be responsible for the translation into each of these languages;

3. Recommends also that the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology be asked to review the glossary periodically and update it as necessary.

Appendix B

Working Group on Toponymic Terminology.
Prognosis of Activities, 1994-1996

The prognosis of activities, as submitted to the UNGEGN rapporteur on 21 June 1994, at the time of the 17th Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, was as follows:

1. Version 2 had been supplied to the New York Secretariat in 1993 on both diskette and printout (only the latter includes all examples in 11 writing systems and scripts, which is one of the innovations of this *Glossary* introduced by the editor). Copies of these to be sent by the Secretariat to the Experts who volunteered to translate the English text, as well as to the U.N. Reference and Terminology Service, to be received by 31 July 1994.

2. Translation into French and Spanish by the respective Experts, and into Arabic and Russian by U.N. Reference and Terminology Service to be completed by 31 December 1994. Note: the translation into Chinese had already been performed.

3. All translated material to be returned to the UNGEGN Secretariat by 15 June 1995.

4. All material to be sent by the Secretariat to the Convenor of the Working Group by 31 July 1995.

5. Material to be collated by the Convenor and returned to the Secretariat by 31 December 1995.

6. All material in the six U.N. official languages to be reproduced by the Secretariat prior to the 18th Session of UNGEGN.